

Lincoln-Lancaster Metropolitan Planning Organization Public Participation Plan

Technical Committee: October 27, 1994
Officials Committee: December 1, 1994
Metropolitan Planning Organization: December 2, 1994

The Public Participation Plan of Lincoln and Lancaster County is a proactive process which seeks to provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions and the early and continuous involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans and programs.

The transportation planning and development process in Lincoln and Lancaster County involves a series of steps from the adoption of the Lincoln City Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan to the actual construction of the transportation facility. It is the intent and policy of the Lincoln City-Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization (LCLCMPO) to provide timely access to general and technical information, public notice and opportunity to comment at each step of the process. It is also the policy of the LCLCMPO to consolidate the various public participation requirement of the MPO with the public participation requirements of the City and County governments.

The critical decision points in the transportation planning process are: 1. the development of a 20 year transportation network, 2. a phased improvement plan which identifies proposed improvements for ten and twenty years, 3. Capital Improvement Programs for a period of six years, 4. Project Design, and 5. Project Construction. The first two steps are included in the Comprehensive Plan, the third step consolidates the Capital Improvement Programs of the City and County with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the last steps are the specific project design and development.

Public Participation in the development, adoption and amendment of the Lincoln City Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan.

The Lincoln City Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan is the Transportation Plan of the Lincoln City Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization. Before it is adopted or amended by the LCLCMPO, State law and the City Charter require a formal and detailed public hearing process. That process includes formal public legal notice and formal Public Hearings by the Lincoln City Lancaster County Planning Commission, the Lincoln City Council and the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners. Meeting notices are published as legal notices in a local paper of general circulation, and the Planning Commission, City Council and County Commission agendas are published in the news columns of local papers. Meeting notices are also included on the local cable television system's Public Access Bulletin Board. Comprehensive plan amendments are typically major news events which attract the widespread attention of the television, radio and print news media. All hearings of the Planning Commission, City Council and County Board are televised live on

the local cable television system and all meetings, subject to the open meeting law, are open to the public.

During a major update of the Comprehensive Plan, such as that undertaken between 1989 and 1994, other means of public participation are employed including neighborhood and community meetings, special television productions and a voice mail system (441-PLAN). Records of meetings are available for public inspection.

The Technical Committee of the LCLCMPO will generally review and comment upon the transportation element of the plan before the close of the Planning Commission Public Hearing. The Technical Committee will generally not conduct Public Hearings, but its meetings, records and actions are open and available for public inspection. Technical documents, including the "Transportation Technical Report," are published and widely distributed.

The Officials Committee of the LCLCMPO will generally review and comment upon the transportation element of the plan after it is accepted by the City and County legislative bodies. The Officials Committee will generally not conduct public hearings but its meetings, records and actions are available for public inspection.

Public Participation in the development and adoption of the Capital Improvement Programs of the City and County and the Transportation Improvement Program.

The adoption of a capital improvement program is the next key decision point in the transportation planning process in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The City and the County each have an established procedure for adopting an improvement program. Both City and County processes include review by the Planning Commission for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and formal advertised Public Hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council or County Board.

The consolidation of these improvements programs is coordinated in the Transportation Improvement Program which is reviewed by the Technical Committee before it is referred to a formal hearing of the Planning Commission. After the public hearing, the Planning Commission forwards the TIP to the Officials Committee. The Officials Committee will normally not conduct a formal hearing on the TIP, but its meetings, records and actions are open for public inspections. Projects included in the Transportation Improvement Program must be consistent with the Lincoln Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan.

Public Participation in the development of Specific Project Design.

After a project has progressed through the transportation planning process and has been funded for design, additional public participation is available for projects within the City of Lincoln. During this key decision phase, additional public participation may be offered through open houses, public informational meetings or partnering sessions. During this phase of the planning process the City's Street Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) will review and comment on project scope and design, although it will not normally conduct Public Hearings. The City Council will often conduct public hearings about a particular improvement project at its discretion. This task is detailed further in the "Street Project Selection Process" manual published by the City's Department of Public Works.

Public Participation in the Construction of a Project

Advance notice of project construction is given adjacent and abutting property owners. The notice includes approximate construction period, any increase in roadway widths, and dates, time and location of any informational meetings to be held.

Public Participation in the Major Transportation Investments.

Projects involving a major investment of transportation resources may offer additional opportunities for public involvement through such techniques as partnering, design charrettes or mediation. Involvement and level of public participation will be dependent upon the particular scope of work.

Public Participation in Subarea Planning.

Planning of subareas within Lincoln and Lancaster County, including subarea transportation planning, are encouraged in the Lincoln City-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan. Such planning encourages an open process with participation of a representative number of residents. Such participation may include partnering, design charrettes or mediation. Formal adoption of subarea plans are then subject to the normal comprehensive plan approval process.

Public Participation in Major Land Use Changes Affecting Transportation Facilities.

When major developments or land use changes are proposed that would have a significant impact upon the transportation system, local regulations include a provision for the applicants to prepare a "traffic impact study." The study is intended to detail the affect the development would have on the surrounding street network. This information is made available for public review as part of the application and is subject to comment at the public hearings held before the Planning Commission, City Council and County Board.

Public Participation by those traditionally underserved by the Transportation System.

It is the policy of the LCLCMPO to seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by the transportation system, including but not limited to low income and minority households. Explicit consideration and response will be given to all input received during the planning and program development process.

Public Notification of Transportation Planning Activities.

As a means of informing citizens and officials on the long-range transportation planning process and activities, interested parties can fill out a Transportation Planning Information Questionnaire. This places their names a mailing list to receive notices, agendas and minutes of the Technical and Officials Committee, Planning Commission, City Council, and

County Board meetings when long-range transportation planning issues are considered, and to receive an "Annual Transportation/Transportation Systems Management Report".

Public Participation for the Lincoln StarTran Public Transit System.

StarTran Advisory Board conducts public hearings for StarTran CIP, and route, schedule and fare changes, and makes recommendations regarding other StarTran programs and services.

StarTran Citizen Advisory Group is an ad hoc citizen committee charged to consider and address StarTran transit related operating and program services.

StarTran "Town Hall" meetings are annual open forum public meetings at which StarTran-related issues are discussed and addressed.

The League of Human Dignity Transportation Committee, a subcommittee of the League of Human Dignity Board of Directors, addresses special transportation services for persons with disabilities.

StarTran "Report Card" is an on-board survey and comment card that is completed by StarTran patrons regarding StarTran services and operations.

For more information about the Transportation Planning Process in the Lincoln Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization, contact:

Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department
555 South 10th Street
County-City Building
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-441-7491

Lincoln City Transportation Department
233 So. 10th, Street, 2nd Floor
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-441-7455

Lincoln City Public Works Department
555 South 10th Street
County-City Building
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-441-7548

Lancaster County Engineer
555 South 10th Street
County-City Building
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-441-7681

Nebraska Department of Roads
P.O. Box 94759
Lincoln, NE 68509-4759
402-471-4567

Federal Highway Administration
100 Centennial Mall North
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-437-5521

The Lincoln City-Lancaster County MPO is developing a mailing list for the dissemination of information relating to the Transportation Plan. Notify the Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department to be added to this list.

Comments on the Public Participation Plan.

Comments on the Public Participation Plan for the Lincoln City-Lancaster County Metropolitan Planning Organization have been received over the 45 day comment period, October 5, 1994 to November 21, 1994. Written comments submitted by November 21, 1994 are attached. Listed below are the comments received on the public participation procedures along with a staff response. Additions proposed by the Transportation Department were recommended by the Technical Committee to be included and have been incorporated into the Plan. Comments received after the comment period will be considered in future amendments to the process.

Comment #1: The long-range transportation planning and short/medium-range transit planning/implementation public participation processes need to be identified within the Plan. These included the following:

- 1) Identification of the Transportation Planning Information Questionnaire that provides citizens and officials an opportunity to receive notices, agendas and minutes for Technical and Officials Committee, Planning Commission, City Council, and County Board meetings when long range transportation planning issues are considered, and to receive an "Annual Transportation/Transportation Systems Management Report".
- 2) StarTran Advisory Board conducts public hearings for StarTran CIP, and route, schedule and fare changes, and makes recommendations regarding other StarTran programs and services.
- 3) StarTran Citizen Advisory Group is an ad hoc citizen committee charged to consider and address StarTran transit related operating and program services.
- 4) StarTran "Town Hall" meetings are annual open forum public meetings at which StarTran-related issues are discussed and addressed.
- 5) The League of Human Dignity Transportation Committee, a subcommittee of the League of Human Dignity Board of Directors, addresses special transportation services for persons with disabilities.
- 6) StarTran "Report Card" is an on-board survey and comment card that is completed by StarTran patrons regarding StarTran services and operations.

Response: All of the public participation processes recommended for inclusion have been incorporated into the Public Participation Plan.

Comment #2: A recommendation that the planning process for transportation to include a strong and comprehensive measures devoted to expanded and improved public mass transit.

Response: Public transit service issues are addressed within citizen committees and meetings open to all groups. These committees and meetings include the StarTran Advisory Board, the StarTran Citizen Advisory Group, the StarTran "Town Hall" meetings, and the League of Human Dignity Transportation Committee.

Comment #3: It was recommended that public transit service be considered in the initial plans for new developments.

Response: Transportation impacts of new developments are considered within the current or site planning process. When the transportation impacts are significant, they are addressed in system analysis during the annual review of the "Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan."

Comment #4: A recommendation that light rail transit systems be considered in the long-range planning process.

Response: Long-range public transit issues are considered within the comprehensive planning process. The transportation element of the "1994 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan" identifies the communities goals and strategies that were developed within the planning process.

Comment #5: The Citizen's Transportation Coalition requested that it be added to the Lincoln City-Lancaster County MPO mailing list to receive information relating to the Transportation Plan.

Response: The name of the Citizen's Transportation Coalition has been added to the MPO mailing list.

Comment #6: A recommendation that the wording be changed in the section Public Participation in the Development of Specific Project Design to read "During this key decision phase, additional public participation ~~may~~ SHALL be offered..." The suggestion is to have meetings within impacted neighborhoods before plans are drawn up which would give property owners time for reflection and comment on a proposed project.

Response: The long-range transportation plan in the "Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan" identifies the "Future Road Network" for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County that was developed within the comprehensive planning process. The extent of each roadway capacity increase is identified within the differentiated set of "Street Design Standards" which indicate the number of travel lanes, right-of-way widths, median provisions, and left-turn lanes for each project. It is recognized within the plan that each street design must be applied sensitively within different settings since streets are viewed a part of the environmental design and fabric of the community.

A "Major Impact Study" is an expanded system planning and citizen participation process undertaken when a project is considered to have extensive community impacts that will require additional project alternatives planning or corridor analysis.

The project design phase of a project is the development of the detailed construction plans and specifications for a specific project. This phase of a project is the result of funding provided in a budget of the City, County, State, or Federal government. It is at this point, before construction plans are developed, the project is reviewed in detail.

In the City of Lincoln, the projects are reviewed by the Street Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC). Public information meetings are held for neighborhoods and businesses to gather input. The City Council holds public hearings and directs staff to implement the project within specific parameters.

Comment #7: Opportunities for public input within the transportation planning process and points of access for public input was not clear in the Plan. There is a need to more clearly identify the process for the general public. It was recommended that a "citizen's

guide to public participation" be developed identifying opportunities for access within the planning process and the appropriate input for each committee.

Response: A citizen's guide or brochure on the transportation planning process is to be developed that will identify the specific ways for public input. The brochure is to describe each committee's role within the process and the types of input requested. This project is to be identified in the Planning Work Program for FY 1995-96.

Comment #8: There was a question on why the Technical and Officials Committees will not necessarily conduct public hearings.

Response: The Technical Committee generally reviews and comments upon the Transportation Plan in relation to its technical merit and its conformance to Federal guidelines and regulations. Technical documents, including the "Transportation Technical Report," are published and widely distributed. This is completed before the close of the Planning Commission Public Hearing making their findings available to the Planning Commission and the public.

The Officials Committee generally reviews and comments upon the Transportation Plan after it has been accepted by the City Council and the County Board legislative bodies. This review has the benefit of public hearing held by the City and County.

Comment #9: Eleanor Francke requested that her name be added to the Lincoln City-Lancaster County MPO mailing list to receive information relating to the Transportation Plan.

Response: The name of Eleanor Francke has been added to the MPO mailing list.

Comments